

This Day is Published,

RB23 1414 (2)

STOCKDALE'S EDITION

OF

SHAKSPEARE;

INCLUDING,

IN ONE VOLUME,

THE WHOLE OF HIS

DRAMATIC WORKS;

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES,

COMPILED FROM

VARIOUS COMMENTATORS.

Embellished with a striking Likeness of the AUTHOR.

"Nature her pencil to his hand commits,

"And then in all her forms to this great Master 'fits."

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE,
OPPOSITE BURLINGTON-HOUSE, PICCADILLY.

M,DCC,LXXXIV.

STOCKDALE'S EDITION OF SHAKSPEARE.

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC

A new edition of SHAKSPEARE, and an edition of so singular a form as the present, in which all his plays are comprehended in one volume, will, perhaps, appear surprising to many readers; but, upon a little reflection, their surprize will, the Editor doubts not, be converted into approbation.

Much as SHAKSPEARE has been read of late years, and largely as the admiration and study of him have been extended, there is still a numerous class of men to whom he is very imperfectly known. Many of the middling and lower ranks of the inhabitants of this country are either not acquainted with him at all, excepting by name, or have only seen a few of his plays, which have accidentally fallen in their way. It is to supply the wants of these persons that the present edition is principally undertaken; and it cannot fail of becoming to them a perpetual source of entertainment and instruction. That they will derive the highest entertainment from it, no one can deny; for it does not require any extraordinary degree of knowledge or education to enter into the general spirit of SHAKSPEARE. The passions he describes are the passions which are felt by every human being; and his wit and humour are not local, or confined to the customs of a particular age, but are such as will give pleasure at all times, and to men of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest.

But the instruction that may be drawn from SHAKSPEARE is equal to the entertainment which his writings afford.

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afford. He is the greatest master of human nature, and of human life, that, perhaps, ever existed; so that we cannot peruse his works without having our understandings considerably enlarged. Besides this, he abounds in occasional maxims and reflections, which are calculated to make a deep impression upon the mind. There is scarcely any circumstance in the common occurrences of the world, on which something may not be found peculiarly applicable in SHAKSPEARE; and at the same time, better expressed than in any other author. To promote, therefore, the knowledge of him, is to contribute to general improvement.

Nor is the utility of the present publication confined to persons of the rank already described; it will be found serviceable even to those whose situation in life hath enabled them to purchase all the expensive editions of our great dramatist. The book now offered to the public may commodiously be taken into a coach or a post chaise, for amusement in a journey; or if a company of gentlemen should happen, in conversation, to mention SHAKSPEARE, or to dispute concerning any particular passage, a volume containing the whole of his plays may, with great convenience, be fetched by a servant out of a library or a closet. In short, any particular passage may, at all times, and with ease, be recurred to. It is a compendium, not an abridgement, of the noblest of our poets, and a library in a single volume.

The Editor hath endeavoured to give all the perfection to this work which the nature of it can admit. The account of his life, which is taken from Rowe, and his last will, in reality,

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reality, comprehend almost every thing that is known with regard to the personal history of SHAKSPEARE. The anxious researches of his admirers have scarcely been able to collect any farther information concerning him.

The text, in the present edition, is given as it has been settled by the most approved commentators. It does not consist with the limits of the design, that the notes should be large, or very numerous: they have not, however, been wholly neglected. The notes which are subjoined are such as were necessary for the purpose of illustrating and explaining obsolete words, unusual phrases, old customs, and obscure or distant allusions. In short, it has been the Editor's aim to omit nothing which may serve to render SHAKSPEARE intelligible to every capacity, and to every class of readers.

Having this view, he cannot avoid expressing his hope, that an undertaking, the utility of which is so apparent, will be encouraged by the public; and his confidence of a favourable reception is increased by the consciousness that he is not doing an injury to any one. The success of the present volume will not impede the sale of the larger editions of SHAKSPEARE, which will still be equally sought for by those to whom the purchase of them may be convenient.



